

Lots of news this month: reports from General Synod and Annual Meeting 2015, information from Charleston and across the South, ordinations, and much more from around the Conference!



Highlights from General Synod 30



The Southeast Conference was well represented in Cleveland, Ohio for the 30th General Synod of the United Church of Christ where we explored "unexpected places." The Southeast Conference delegates were Kirk Lyman Barner, Ben Rose, Debbie Spearman, Jeremy Rutledge, Lacey Brown, Marvin Morgan, Charmaine Johnson, Gwen Thomas, and Carrole Moss. In addition to the nine people who officially represented our conference, we were joined by many folks from our local churches in Birmingham, Marietta, Mobile, Atlanta, Savannah, Flowood, Pleasant Hill, and Nashville.

One of the highlights for us was the presentation of new business in the form of an emergency resolution entitled "A Just and Compassionate Response to the Shooting at Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina." It was adopted by a unanimous vote of the delegates. Jeremy Rutledge, pastor at Circular Congregational Church in Charleston, was the sponsoring delegate with Marvin Morgan and Carrole Moss as supporting delegates along with Ervin Milton from Southern Conference. You can read more about the resolution on our website.

As we were gathering for Synod, the Supreme Court rendered its decision on marriage equality. Many UCC folks were in attendance at the rally held on the steps of Cleveland City Hall. It was reported that three weddings were officiated by UCC clergy at General Synod. There was a memorial service for Tamir Rice, the young boy killed in Cleveland. We also lifted up the Supreme Court ruling on the Affordable Care Act. One other highlight was Sunday worship at the Amistad Chapel in the national offices of the UCC.

Some of our Southeast churches participated in the national UCC literacy project. There was a

Gala Dinner to celebrate that project with Antwoine Fisher as the speaker. Delegates and visitors to General Synod were encouraged to bring school supplies to stuff backpacks for children in Cleveland and in Cairo, Egypt.

In between was amazing worship, hearings on 13 resolutions, the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the UCC Open and Affirming Coalition, the work of committees to bring resolutions to the floor of General Synod, hearings on revisions to the UCC Constitution and Bylaws, special meals hosted by many UCC groups, the election of a new General Minister and President-John Dorhauer, engaging preaching, wonderful music, and a farewell to retiring General Minister and President Geoffrey Black. The Central Atlantic Conference ended our time together with a fun and lively invitation to Baltimore in 2017.

Responding to Recent Events in Charleston and Beyond

We have had requests in the Conference office from people wishing to respond to various issues related to South Carolina. Here is a partial listing of activities being planned:

Helping Rebuild the Churches that have Burned

The United Church of Christ has an Emergency USA Fund, and donations to it can be earmarked "Burned Churches, 2015." You can send your contributions through the Southeast Conference or directly to Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland OH 44115. In the coming weeks national staff will determine where the capacity is emerging for long term recovery, it will almost certainly be ecumenical. Further plans will be communicated on the national UCC website.

Threats to female AME Ministers in South Carolina

National Staff of the UCC are deliberating about how to respond to this. More information will be available on the national UCC website next week.

Response to threats received by Confederate Flag

The Southeast Conference UCC is a member organization of the South Carolina Christian Action Council. The Council invites you to attend these upcoming events to build support to retire the Confederate flag. Come and bring friends to any or all of these events and share this e-mail with your network.

Unity Rally - Saturday, July 4, 4:00 PM - State House Steps, Main & Gervais

- Hosted in collaboration with Take the Flag Down SC. Featuring live music and speeches from civic leaders who support the Campaign for Dignity in South Carolina. Make plans now to attend this patriotic protest rally.

Unity and Justice Vigil - Monday, July 6, 7:00 PM - State House Steps, Main & Gervais

- We will memorialize many of the victims of terrorism and violence in the shadow of the Confederate flag in South Carolina and examine the way forward after the Charleston Massacre that addresses the core racial disparities that define the Campaign for Dignity in South Carolina

Press Conference & Legislative Watch - Tuesday, July 7, 12:00 PM - State House, 1st Floor

- The final push before what we anticipate to be an historic vote on the future of South Carolina. Witness the deliberations in the House and Senate Chambers leading to what we pray will be a final vote to place the divisive banner of the Confederacy in a museum.

A Pastoral Letter in response to the shooting at Emanuel AME Church

In case you missed it, Designated Conference Minister June Boutwell authored a pastoral letter in response to the shooting at Mother Emanuel church in Charleston. [View it on our website here.](#)

Highlights from the 49th Annual Meeting

On June 11-13, the Southeast Conference gathered at Piedmont College to explore the theme

"Building God's House." We had 108 persons attend the meeting representing 38 of our 55 congregations. The Authorized Ministers Retreat was attended by 19 clergy and the Persons in Exploration/Members in Discernment Retreat had 16 persons in attendance.

We were blessed to hear Rev. Denise Bell, Regional Minister for the Christian Church in Georgia (Disciples of Christ) as she preached our opening worship. As always, the Service of Remembrance on Saturday morning allowed us to remember the saints that have passed on since our last annual meeting. And closing communion allowed time for us to gather around Christ's table as we turned our thoughts and bodies homeward.



We will be posting new leadership on the Conference website in the next few weeks. And look forward to the Board Ambassador for your church to be contacting you. We are beginning to plan for our 50th anniversary in 2016. If you are interested in being a part of the planning, please contact the Conference office.

Lonnie King accepts Piedmont College honorary degree

Civil rights pioneer Lonnie C. King Jr. of Atlanta was presented with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Piedmont College during a ceremony Friday, June 12, at the College in Demorest, Georgia. The presentation was made during the annual meeting of the Southeast Conference United Church of Christ held this week at the college. [Read more on our website...](#)

The Conference Recognizes the 17 "5 for 5" Congregations

Being "5 for 5" is one sign of congregational vitality in UCC churches that fully support Our Church's Wider Mission. In addition to giving to Basic Support for Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), 5 for 5 churches give to all four Special Mission Offerings: Neighbors in Need, The Christmas Fund, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Strengthen the Church. [View the list of leadership congregations.](#)

Jottings from June: Too Blessed to be Stressed!

June was a very busy month with three Conference Annual Meetings and General Synod, the biennial national gathering of the United Church of Christ. I was privileged to be a part of the South Central Conference Annual Meeting in New Orleans the first week in June to wish Conference Minister Douglas Anders well in his upcoming retirement. Some of you may remember Rev. Anders from Southeast Conference Annual Meeting in 2014.



Then we had our own wonderful Annual Meeting at Piedmont College. We had 19 people at the pre-Meeting Authorized Ministers Retreat, 16 people at the Persons in Exploration/Members in Discernment Retreat, and 108 registrants for the Annual Meeting representing 38 congregations. Our evaluations indicate that it was generally a well-received meeting. We will take all your comments seriously as we plan for next year and our 50th anniversary celebration. If anyone is willing to serve on the planning committee for the anniversary, please let me know.

The Annual Meeting at Southern Conference was their 50th anniversary celebration so I got some wonderful ideas from them as well as celebrating with them. Then I went to General Synod which is always a treat as I get to see friends and colleagues from near and far. We had a superb delegation who worked diligently while we had fun getting to know one another better. We were blessed to be a part of a Southern Region morning caucus with our three sister conferences (Southern, South Central and Florida) and invited to join Minnesota Conference for a morning caucus. Wonderful welcome and hospitality and a chance to hear speakers addressing various items of business before the General Synod.

I will be on vacation starting the holiday time around the 4th of July and will be back in the office Wednesday July 22. I invite your prayers for a time of rest and renewal. We will also be committing my mother's ashes on the water off the Oregon coast so I invite your prayers for my family as well. May your summer be blessed with all that is good and pleasant.



We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2015. Each month, we will publish a weekly list for the month and post them weekly on our Facebook page. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

- [Click here to download the July and August prayer list](#)
- [Click here to download the entire 2015 prayer list](#)

Highlights for July:

- Continued prayers for **Rev. Dr. Sarah Kim**, Southeast Conference Director of Theological Education and Dean of PATHWAYS, as she returns from sabbatical July 16.
- Gratitude for our General Synod Delegates who were in Cleveland June 26-30. **Ben Rose** says "One of my favorite parts of Synod 30 was worshiping and working with my fellow Southeast delegates. They approached their work at the 30th synod in an intentional and prayerful way. Synod included both reflection and celebration. We began to discern who we are as the body of Christ and we celebrated our diverse and vibrant United Church of Christ."
- **Michelle Holtmann** will be ordained at Central Congregational Church UCC on July 12, 2015.
- Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC, Pleasant Hill Tennessee will install **Rev. Glenna Shepherd** on July 26 at 3:30 p.m.
- Pilgrim UCC, Birmingham has called **Rev. Paul Eknes-Tucker** to serve as senior pastor beginning June 1, 2015
- **Rev. Leslie Etheredge** has been called to serve as Regional Minister of the Gulf Coast (Western) Region of the Florida Conference beginning in August.

Churches in transition:

Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Church of the Savior, Alpharetta Georgia; United Church, Cookeville Tennessee; Peace Congregational UCC, Clemson South Carolina; Pensacola UCC, Pensacola Florida; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee; Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee.

Ordination of Dan Stark

Dan Stark was ordained at Decatur UCC on June 14 by Rev. June Boutwell, Rev. Kathy Burton, and Rev. Valerie Coe-Lowder.

Dan's immediate and extended family was there to celebrate with him. He was also joined by members of Christ Church, UCC in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dan's calling parish.



Save the Date

August 8 - Commission on Ministry
Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, TN

October 5-7 - Retired Servants Retreat
Blowing Rock Conference Center, NC

October 16-18 - Southern Region Women's Retreat
Sumatanga Retreat Center, Gallant, AL

July 26-29, 2016 - National Youth Event in Orlando, Florida



Living Our Faith in a Multi-Faith World

October 5-7, 2015
Living Our Faith in a Multi-Faith World
5th Annual Retreat for Retired UCC Servants

Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock, North Carolina. Speakers will be UCC Volunteer Coordinator, Rev. Mary SchallerBlaufuss, who serves as Team Leader, Global Sharing of Resources, National UCC Staff and Dr. Jan Fuller, Chaplain at Elon University, will lead our discussion about Islam.

- [Click here for more information and registration on the SEC website](#)

2015 Southern Region Women's Retreat

We invite you to come dance with us at this year's Southern Region Women's Retreat. This includes the United Church of Christ Conferences: Southeast, South Central, Southern and Florida.

This fun and meaningful event is taking place October 16-18 amidst the beautiful fall foliage of Sumatanga Conference Center in Gallant, Alabama, about 45 minutes north of Birmingham.

During our time together we will experience a time of relaxation, refreshment and renewal as all of us, in our own way, Celebrate the Lord of the Dance. You can look forward to a time of fellowship with old friends and new, as well as some great "takeaways" for your own sacred dance and also that of your church.



- [Click here to register online](#)
- [Click here for more information the SECUCC website](#)

Memorial Service for Ted and Donna Braun

A joint memorial service for Ted and Donna Braun will be held on August 8 at 1:30 at the Pleasant Hill Community Church in Tennessee.

Ted served at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Carbondale, Illinois from 1973-1992. They retired to the UCC Uplands community in Pleasant Hill in 1992. For more information about the service, please call the Pleasant Hill Community Church at 931-277-3193. Donations may be sent to:

Tennessee Technological University
Department of Music
Donna Braun Memorial Fund
P.O. Box 1915
Cookeville, TN 38505

Shalom Center for Continuing Education
P.O. Box 167
Pleasant Hill, TN. 38578

Book Reading of *Out on a Limb: Sermons of Risk and Revolution* by Rev. Glenna Shepherd

As questions of "Religious Freedom" haunt the news and the legislature, Charis Books in Atlanta will welcome Rev. Glenna Shepherd for a reading from her new book, "*Out on a Limb: Sermons of Risk and Revolution*." Rev. Shepherd is pastor at Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC in Pleasant Hill, TN.

The book, a collection of homilies that focus on liberating spirituality, begins with scriptural texts and explores the intersections of current political and social issues and the radical messages of the prophets of Judeo-Christian scriptures. Rev. Shepherd brings a new perspective to current issues that often divide and alienate modern people from religion: gender, sexuality, race - immigration, marriage, and nationalism - a perspective that offers openness and hope for embracing a liberating spiritual life for today.

This is a Charis Circle From Margin to Center Event. The suggested donation is \$5.



<http://www.charisbooksandmore.com/event/out-limb-sermons-risk-and-revolution-glenna-shepherd>

Opportunities for Continuing Education

July 27-30: Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills in Knoxville, TN

- You are invited to attend a four-day workshop facilitated by the Center for Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills in Knoxville, TN from July 27-30, 2015. This core EQ HR Center workshop is an intensive session designed to enable participants to learn about, build and practice emotional intelligence skills in a small group setting. [Visit the Southeast Conference website for details.](#)

August 18: Mental Health First Aid at Peachtree Christian Church in Atlanta, GA

- As many pastors and church leaders have experienced, untreated mental illnesses can have wide-reaching impact on any community, including churches. Mental Health First Aid, an internationally taught and recognized program, provides tools for responding to mental illness and guiding people towards real help. [Visit the Georgia Disciples website for more details.](#)

November 3-7: Emotional Intelligence in Moravia, NY

- The Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church invites you to a training workshop in emotional intelligence by staff of the Alban Institute Upper New York. The five-day workshop is scheduled for November 3-7, 2014 at Casowasco Camp and Retreat Center in Moravia, New York. [Visit the UNY UMC website for details.](#)

November 16-20: Mediation Skills Training in Columbia, SC

- Consider attending the Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders in Columbia, SC from November 16-20. This training is open to church leaders in all areas of ministry, and is valuable for dealing with current conflict as well as learning to be proactive so that conflict can be transformative. Register now and save \$100. [Visit the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center website for details.](#)

Still Speaking Worship Event Offered Online

The Faith Formation Team of Local Church Ministries is offering an online opportunity for United Church of Christ churches to enter into a panel discussion on "Creating Sacred Space" for worship. This panel of liturgical art specialists will be discussing the importance of the worship space and offer ways to use it creatively in order to enhance worship.

The event will stream live at 11 AM (EDT) on October 27, 2015 from the Amistad Chapel at the Church House in Cleveland, Ohio at ucc.org/creating_sacred_space. This event will be recorded and posted at this link for later viewing.

Visit ucc.org/creating_sacred_space or contact Rev. Ivy Beckwith at beckwithi@ucc.org with any questions.

Widening the Welcome 2015: Inclusion for All National Conference

The 5th National UCC Widening the Welcome: Inclusion for All Conference will be September 24-26, Hartford, CT. These Conferences have been a sign of the movement in our UCC to address concerns and issues around disabilities, mental health challenges, and cognitive/developmental disabilities. Our hope is for our congregations to be inclusive of persons who are living with these life experiences.

Along with theological insights there will be practical applications and networking with others from across the country. There will be inspiration through worship, music, and storytelling. You are invited to attend and to send the information along to others. This Conference is hosted by the UCC Disabilities Ministries and the UCC Mental Health Network.



<http://www.moredomainsforless.com/wideningthewelcome/>

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